

## Meeting Former Bolivian President Jorge Quiroga...

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On Monday, September 10, 2007, six Awty Students went to a World Affairs Council of Houston Event at the Four Seasons Downtown. The World Affairs Council of Houston gave Awty students the opportunity to meet the Former President of Bolivia, Jorge Quiroga. President Quiroga is a graduate of Texas A&M University, with a degree in industrial engineering and was President of Bolivia from August 2001 to August 2002.

President Quiroga met with about twenty people, some students from college and others from high school. We were given an incredible and rare opportunity to speak to him within a small group. It did not seem as though President Quiroga had a prepared speech as he told us to ask him questions. He educated us on various topics concerning Bolivia and South America, covering both economic and political ground. President Quiroga was very personable with the students and answered all of our questions with enthusiasm. This day was enriching for all of Awty's students, it gave us the opportunity to learn more about South America from a Bolivian President's point of view and equally interesting for the students who have participated in the annual trip to the Bolivian orphanage.

After our conversation with President Quiroga, we were invited to attend the luncheon, which was open to the World Affairs Council of Houston's members. We enjoyed a lovely lunch and heard Mr. Quiroga address the members as well.



*Awty Students with President Jorge Quiroga*

Zach Goldman said, "I was fortunate enough to attend a conference with former Bolivian President Jorge Quiroga hosted by the World Affairs Council of Houston. From the ever-increasing Venezuelan influence in South America to the economic situations of various South American countries, Quiroga addressed many issues pertaining to South America. I found the conference very informative and interesting. Having traveled to Bolivia and Argentina, I

particularly enjoyed the conference. I believe that the school should have more excursions like this one, they provide important information that cannot be found in the classroom.”



*Monica Alexander, Brenda Salinas, and Zach*

Another participant, Monica Alexander mentioned, “I decided to attend the conference with Jorge Quiroga, the former president of Bolivia, because of my own personal feelings and experiences towards the country. In the summer of 2006, I volunteered at the Hogar San Ignacio de Loyola and the kids there became like my second family. I felt so comfortable during my three-week stay and I felt like I had a mission on that trip. My mission was to give all the love in the world to every single one of those kids because they had been shielded away from the love of their own families.

Seeing them running up to me in the mornings, begging for me to sit at their table made me smile. Seeing them smile like they meant it made me feel that I accomplished my mission there. President Quiroga was from the city where the home is located, Cochabamba. I felt a connection to what he was saying because I saw it and lived it. He is probably one of the most down-to-earth politicians I have ever heard speak. I felt that he has a huge love for his country and wants whatever is best for it. I am going to have to agree on that with him.”

Brenda Salinas mentioned, “I was very honored to have been invited to the conference. I became much more informed on South American economical and political affairs. The conference was very interesting and President Quiroga was very warm and charismatic. He answered all of our questions in a straight-forward fashion. I hope that Awty continues participating in these events because it brings our social science classes to life.”

Olivia Folliot added, “I’m so glad I got to go because not only was it interesting, but it allowed us to meet President Quiroga and talk to him about things that mattered to him and to us in a very intimate setting. I learned a lot and I hope that more opportunities like this one will present themselves!”

Personally, I am very happy I was invited to attend such a great event—how many people can say they have met a former President? It was very interesting to hear about President Quiroga’s view on current issues and I am even more excited to hopefully participate in the trip to the San Ignacio Orphanage in Bolivia this summer. Without a doubt, I would attend another World Affairs Council Event of this sort and I encourage all of you to do the same.



*Olivia Folliot and Safa Ansari-Bayegan*